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CORE legislative initiative advances development of Michigan cities and villages

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LANSING – A bipartisan group of senators today announced legislation designed to help revitalize downtowns and commerce centers across Michigan and create job opportunities.

The Creating Opportunities for Renewed Economies – CORE – is geared toward expanding and coordinating many state economic programs to operate more effectively, as well as provide incentives for growth in our cities and villages.

"As we move to make Michigan more competitive, we must ensure all regions of the state benefit from economic growth," said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "Michigan's economic development efforts must lift up all communities, not just those in large urban areas. CORE recognizes that revitalizing our villages and smaller cities is just as important as building up our urban centers."

The package is designed to help communities across the state revitalize their central business and residential districts, initiate new growth and create job opportunities.

"Over the past few decades, Michigan's cities and villages have seen a profound impact on their downtowns and city centers," said Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City. "Our aim with this legislation is to start providing additional tools and enhancing existing programs that encourage growth and economic development in our cities and villages."

Legislation included in the CORE package would:

- Establish a "Commerce Center" as a city, village or large urban township to address the needs of Michigan's economic hubs;
- Allow municipalities to designate a historical neighborhood tax increment finance authority to eliminate the causes of deterioration, and promote residential and economic growth within a historic district;
- Provide incentives for city or village residents to offer additional housing for renters and office space options;
- Allow downtown development authorities to use funds for the creation of wireless Internet systems and develop marketing initiatives;
- Create a process that will expedite the issuing of construction permits; and
- Allow a downtown development authority to operate a parking violations bureau for a local unit of government.

"In order for Michigan to be economically prosperous we need to ensure that our cities and villages are the centers for commerce," Allen said. "Michigan's policies should encourage economic development and allow these communities to be more attractive places to grow a business and raise a family."

As a primary package sponsor, Allen noted the package also would include legislation concerning consolidation of state offices, property split tax credits, and neighborhood tax increment finance.

The senators plan to introduce additional legislation directed towards invigorating communities later this year.

"Some people think we need to focus our attention only on the larger communities," Allen said. "Michigan is a large and extremely diverse state. We need to do everything in our power to help all Michigan residents. It shouldn't matter if they live in Boyne City or Battle Creek, Petoskey or Port Huron. Every resident and every community deserves the same opportunities."

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Editor's note: Audio clips of Senator Allen will be available later today on the Internet at http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/.

Editor's note: A photo of Sen. Allen and colleagues unveiling the CORE package will be available later today for download on the Senate Majority Photowire at: http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Allen/Allen.htm